

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL
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S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 3 SEOUL 1664

NODIS CHEROKEE

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR KS US
SUBJ: MEETING WITH PRESIDENT PARK

1. SUMMARY: AMBASSADOR AND GENERAL VESSEY CALLED ON PRESIDENT PARK FEBRUARY 28 TO GIVE GENERAL VESSEY AND OPPORTUNITY TO DELIVER PRESIDENT CARTER'S MESSAGE TO PRESIDENT PARK. SECRETARY GENERAL KIM CHONG-YOM AND SENIOR PROTOCOL SECRETARY CHOI KWANG-SU WERE PRESENT. THE MEETING LASTED ONE HOUR AND TEN MINUTES, AT WHICH PRESIDENT PARK ACKNOWLEDGED APPRECIATION FOR PRESIDENT CARTER'S GREETING AND GENERAL VESSEY'S ASSURANCE THAT PRESIDENT CARTER APPRECIATED THE SECURITY SITUATION IN KOREA. TRIGGERED BY GENERAL VESSEY'S REPORT TO PRESIDENT PARK OF PRESIDENT CARTER'S CONCERN ABOUT MAINTAINING SUPPORT FOR THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA IN THE UNITED STATES, PRESIDENT PARK URGED CONSULTATION ON TROOP DEPLOYMENTS SOONEST AND GAVE A LONG EXPLANATION OF HIS STAND ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE AND HIS REASONS FOR NOT RELEASING THE MYONGDONG DEFENDANTS AT THIS TIME, BUT LEFT DOOR OPEN FOR FUTURE. END SUMMARY.

2. GENERAL VESSEY TOLD PRESIDENT PARK THAT HE HAD SEEN PRESIDENT CARTER AND HAD HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO SPEND NEARLY FORTY MINUTES WITH THE PRESIDENT DISCUSSING THE SECURITY SITUATION IN KOREA. AT THE END OF THE MEETING, PRESIDENT CARTER HAD TOLD HIM ON HIS RETURN TO KOREA TO SEE PRESIDENT
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PARK, TO TELL HIM THAT PRESIDENT CARTER HAD MET WITH HIM ON KOREA, TO PASS HIS GREETINGS TO PRESIDENT PARK, TO SAY THAT HE HAD A GREAT DEAL OF RESPECT FOR PRESIDENT PARK AND FOR KOREA, TO TELL PRESIDENT PARK THAT THE UNITED STATES WOULD HONOR ITS COMMITMENTS FOR THE SECURITY OF THE ROK AND TO TELL PRESIDENT PARK THAT PRESIDENT CARTER WOULD MAKE NO CHANGES IN THE TROOP DEPLOYMENTS UNTIL AFTER CAREFUL

CONSULTATIONS WITH PRESIDENT PARK. VESSEY ALSO TOLD PRESIDENT PARK THAT HE HAD BEEN ABLE TO GIVE PRESIDENT CARTER A FRANK APPRAISAL OF THE THREAT FROM THE NORTH AND THAT HE BELIEVED PRESIDENT CARTER HAD A GOOD APPRECIATION FOR THE SECURITY PROBLEM OF THE ROK. HE ALSO TOLD PRESIDENT PARK THAT PRESIDENT CARTER HAD SAID THAT HE HAD A POLITICAL PROBLEM IN THE UNITED STATES IN MAINTAINING SUPPORT FOR KOREA IN CONGRESS AND WITH THE PEOPLE; THAT THIS POLITICAL PROBLEM CENTERED AROUND THE CONCERN FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND IN DEMONSTRATING A REASONABLE PLAN FOR THE EVENTUAL WITHDRAWAL OF US GROUND FORCES.

3. PRESIDENT PARK THANKED VESSEY FOR THE PRESIDENT'S GREETINGS; INQUIRED ABOUT THE PRESIDENT'S HEALTH; ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE PRESIDENT MUST BE VERY, VERY BUSY AT THIS TIME. PARK EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR THE ASSESSMENT THAT THE PRESIDENT HAD AN UNDERSTANDING FOR THE SITUATION IN KOREA AND THEN ASKED GENERAL VESSEY IF HE HAD RECEIVED ANY INDICATION OF THE DECISION HAVING BEEN MADE ABOUT TROOP WITHDRAWALS. GENERAL VESSEY REPLIED THAT FROM HIS VISITS WITH PRESIDENT CARTER AND DEFENSE SECRETARY BROWN, HE COULD REPORT THAT NO DECISION HAD BEEN MADE, BUT THAT THE PROBLEM WAS VERY MUCH UNDER STUDY. THE INDICATIONS RECEIVED FROM BOTH PRESIDENT CARTER AND FROM DEFENSE SECRETARY BROWN WERE THAT DECISION WOULD NOT BE MADE UNTIL AFTER CONSULTATIONS WITH THE ROK GOVERNMENT.

4. PRESIDENT PARK SAID THAT SINCE THE PROBLEM OF TROOP WITHDRAWALS HAD BEEN RAISED, HE BELIEVED WE SHOULD BEGIN
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QUIET CONSULTATIONS ON THE ISSUE VERY SOON. HE SAID THAT THE PRESS CONTINUED TO CARRY A WIDE VARIETY OF STORIES, SOME STATING THAT PART OF THE TROOPS WOULD BE WITHDRAWN; SOME STATING THAT ALL THE TROOPS WOULD BE WITHDRAWN; AND THAT A WIDE VARIETY OF TIMES FOR THE WITHDRAWALS WERE OFTEN REPORTED. HE BELIEVED THAT SUCH OPEN DEBATE COULD PROVE HARMFUL TO THE SECURITY OF THE ROK; THAT IT WAS IMPORTANT FOR THE TWO GOVERNMENTS TO SETTLE QUESTIONS OF HOW MANY WOULD BE WITHDRAWN AND WHEN THE WITHDRAWALS WERE TO TAKE PLACE BECAUSE THE ANSWERS TO THOSE QUESTIONS COULD REQUIRE A COMPLETE REAPPRAISAL OF KOREA'S SECURITY POSTURE. VESSEY REPLIED THAT IT WAS ALSO PRESIDENT CARTER'S VIEW THAT THE CONSULTATIONS SHOULD TAKE PLACE EARLY. PRESIDENT PARK ASKED THE AMBASSADOR WHAT HE THOUGHT WOULD BE THE TIMING OF THE CONSULTATIONS. THE AMBASSADOR ANSWERED THAT HE WAS NOT SURE OF THE TIMING, BUT HE EXPECTED WORK IN NEAR FUTURE. HE SAID THAT HE WOULD BEGIN WASHINGTON WHEN THE FOREIGN MINISTER VISITED AND HE THOUGHT THE MATTER OF TIMING OF CONSULTATIONS MIGHT WELL

BE ADDRESSED DURING THAT VISIT. PRESIDENT PARK SAID THAT HE HOPED THE TWO GOVERNMENTS COULD COME TO A CONCLUSION EARLY IN THE MATTER AND MAKE THE RESULTS OF THE CONSULTATIONS PUBLIC IN ORDER TO END SPECULATION. THE AMBASSADOR REPLIED THAT THERE WAS NO DISAGREEMENT ON THAT MATTER.

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5. PRESIDENT PARK SAID HE HOPED THE AMBASSADOR WOULD CONVEY HIS VIEWS ON HUMAN RIGHTS, SPECIFICALLY THAT THERE WAS NO SUCH PROBLEM IN KOREA; THAT SOME AMERICANS FROM THEIR VIEW MIGHT CONSIDER THAT THERE WAS A HUMAN RIGHTS PROBLEM IN KOREA, BUT THOSE AMERICANS DID NOT CONSIDER THE UNIQUE SITUATION IN KOREA AND THAT THEY DID NOT UNDERSTAND THAT THE LAWS AND CONSTITUTIONS OF KOREA WERE BEING APPLIED IN A MOST LAWFUL AND LEGAL MANNER. US PRESSURE ON THE GOVERNMENT OF KOREA TO ACT CONTRARY TO THE LAWS AND CONSTITUTION OF KOREA WOULD CAUSE SERIOUS DIFFICULTIES AND COULD WELL UNDERMINE THE SECURITY SITUATION IN THE ROK. PRESIDENT PARK SAID THAT HE COULD ACCEPT SOME MEMBERS OF THE CONGRESS OR SOME PEOPLE CRITICIZING KOREA ON HUMAN RIGHTS BUT THAT HE WOULD FIND IT VERY EMBARRASSING FOR THE US ADMINISTRATION TO BE ALLEGING VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN KOREA. THOSE WHO MAKE AN ISSUE OF HUMAN RIGHTS SEEM TO HAVE A GREAT MISUNDERSTANDING OF THE SITUATION IN KOREA-- THEY DO NOT UNDERSTAND THE CONSTITUTION OR THE LAWS. SOME EVEN PRESS FOR A REDUCTION IN AID AND SOME FOR A TROOP PULL-OUT BECAUSE OF "HUMAN RIGHTS." SUCH COMMENTS ARE VERY, VERY DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND.

6. PRESIDENT PARK WENT ON TO SAY THAT MUCH OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS CONCERN SEEMS TO BE ABOUT THE DEFENDANTS IN THE MYONGDONG CASE. IF THE US GOVERNMENT ASKS US NOT TO APPLY

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OUR LAWS IN THIS CASE, IT WOULD CERTAINLY APPEAR TO BE UNWARRANTED INTERFERENCE IN THE AFFAIRS OF KOREA. PARK SAID HE HAD BEEN IN POWER FOR OVER TEN YEARS; DURING THAT PERIOD THERE HAD BEEN A NUMBER OF PROBLEMS IN THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. SOME OF THE PROBLEMS HAVE BEEN LARGE; SOME TRIVIAL; BUT THERE WAS NO ISSUE ON WHICH PRESIDENT PARK HAD NOT COOPERATED WITH THE UNITED STATES EVEN THOUGH SOMETIMES IT HAD CAUSED HIM GREAT DIFFICULTY IN HIS OWN COUNTRY. HE SAID THAT HE WAS IN NO POSITION UNDER PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES TO COMPLY WITH THE WISHES OF THOSE WHO WOULD PRESSURE HIM ON HUMAN RIGHTS. HE SAID THAT HE WAS ACTING STRICTLY IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE LAWS AND CONSTITUTION OF HIS COUNTRY. HE WAS IN THE FIRM BELIEF THAT HE WAS NOT WRONG IN HIS ACTIONS. HE SAID HE WAS SURE THAT THE AMBASSADOR AND GENERAL VESSEY UNDERSTOOD THAT POLITICAL STABILITY AND SOCIAL ORDER WERE ESSENTIAL FOR SECURITY; HE SAID THAT THE MILITARY FORCES PROTECTING THE COUNTRY WERE UNDER THE ABLE COMMAND OF GENERAL VESSEY AND THAT HE WAS NOT CONCERNED ABOUT THE READINESS AND ALERTNESS OF THOSE FORCES. HE SAID THAT POLITICAL STABILITY AND SOCIAL ORDER WERE ALSO VERY, VERY IMPORTANT TO SECURITY AND THAT THE RELEASE OF THE MYONGDONG DEFENDANTS COULD UPSET THAT STABILITY. HE SAID THAT CERTAINLY THE MYONGDONG DEFENDANTS POSED NO DANGER OF OVERTURNING THE GOVERNMENT; THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS INHERENTLY VERY STABLE. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE PRESIDENT SAID THAT HE HAD REPORTS OF OTHER MOVEMENTS IN COUNTRY AND THAT SUCH MOVEMENTS COULD DRAW ENCOURAGEMENT FROM RELEASE OF THE MYONGDONG DEFENDANTS, PARTICULARLY IF OTHERS BELIEVED THAT THE DEFENDANTS WERE RELEASED AS A RESULT OF US PRESSURE. PRESIDENT PARK SAID THAT IF THE MYONGDONG DEFENDANTS COULD BE RELEASED AND THEN BE TRUSTED NOT TO STIR UP SOME FUTURE TROUBLE ALL WOULD BE WELL BUT THAT THERE WAS NO INDICATION THAT SUCH WOULD BE THE CASE. HE SAID THAT HE SIMPLY WAS NOT IN A POSITION TO RELEASE THOSE PRISONERS AS A RESULT OF US PRESSURE; AND IF THE US CONTINUED TO MAKE AN ISSUE, THOSE IN CUSTODY WOULD

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ONLY BE ENCOURAGED, RATHER THAN REPENTANT, FOR BREAKING THEIR COUNTRY'S LAWS.

7. PARK SAID THAT HE WOULD TAKE THE FRIENDLY ADVICE FROM THE US AND WAS ALWAYS PREPARED TO ACCEPT SUCH ADVICE FROM FRIENDS. HE SAID IF THE US GOVERNMENT TELL US IT HAS

POLITICAL PROBLEMS ABOUT THE PUBLIC IMAGE OF KOREA THEN CERTAINLY WE CAN COOPERATE AND DO SOMETHING TO HELP. ON THE OTHER HAND, IF THE US GOVERNMENT ITSELF SAYS THERE IS A HUMAN RIGHTS PROBLEM IN KOREA THEN IT WILL EMBOLDEN THE OPPOSITION AND AMOUNT TO INTERFERING IN THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF KOREA. THE AMBASSADOR CITED PRESIDENT CARTER'S LETTER AND POINTED OUT THAT PRESIDENT CARTER DOES NOT WANT TO INTERFERE IN KOREAN INTERNAL PROBLEMS. THE AMBASSADOR

SAID THAT HE HOPED THAT IN EXPLAINING PRESIDENT CARTER'S PROBLEMS TO PRESIDENT PARK IT WOULD GIVE PRESIDENT PARK A BROADER BASE OF KNOWLEDGE IN GIVING CONSIDERATION TO THE PROBLEM. THE AMBASSADOR THANKED PRESIDENT PARK FOR THE FRANK DISCUSSION OF THE PROBLEM AND PROMISED TO CONVEY THE POINTS MADE TO AUTHORITIES IN THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT. PARK REPLIED THAT HE WAS NOT TAKING THE POSITION THAT THE US WAS INTERFERING IN KOREAN AFFAIRS; HE WANTED TO POINT OUT THAT IF THE MYONGDONG DEFENDANTS COULD BE RELEASED AND WOULD NOT FOMENT FURTHER TROUBLE, THE ACTION WOULD CERTAINLY HELP THE KOREAN IMAGE AND WOULD HELP PRESIDENT CARTER'S PROBLEM AS WELL AS PRESIDENT PARK'S. INDICATIONS NOW WERE THAT IF THEY WERE RELEASED IT WOULD LEAD ONLY TO FURTHER TROUBLE; THE GOVERNMENT OF KOREA COULD THEN BE REQUIRED TO ARREST MORE PEOPLE CAUSING ONLY GREATER PROBLEMS IN THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE TWO GOVERNMENTS. THERE WAS NO SIGN OF REPETANCE BY THE MYONGDONG GROUP AND NOW WAS NOT THE APPROPRIATE TIME TO RELEASE THEM. HE HOPED THE AMBASSADOR WOULD CONVEY THIS MESSAGE TO HIS GOVERNMENT. HE SAID THAT PERHAPS HE COULD UNDERSTAND PRESIDENT CARTER'S PROBLEM
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BETTER THAN ANYONE ELSE.

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8. COMMENT: TWO ELEMENTS FROM PRESIDENT PARK'S COMMENTS

STAND OUT MOST CLEARLY. FIRST WHILE CONTINUING TO BE
OPPOSED TO ANY GROUND FORCE REDUCTIONS UNDER PRESENT
CIRCUMSTANCES, HE IS VERY ANXIOUS TO GET ON WITH CONSUL-
TATIVE PROCESS IN ORDER TO END SPATE OF CONSTANT SPECULATION
WHICH HE FEARS COULD LEAD TO SENSE OF PANIC AMONG POPULACE
AND

TO START AS SOON AS POSSIBLE PROCESS OF ADJUSTMENT IN
HIS OWN DEFENSE PLANNING TO COMPENSATE FOR ANY REDUCTIONS
THAT MIGHT BE WORKED OUT.

9. SECONDLY, PARK GAVE SIGNAL THAT HE WAS PREPARED TO MAKE
SOME CONCESSIONS ON HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE BUT ON CONDITIONAL
BASIS. THE DOOR PARK OPENED SLIGHTLY DURING MY PREVIOUS
CONVERSATION WITH HIM FEBRUARY 16 (SEOUL 1353) SHOWS A BIT
MORE DAYLIGHT. AS WE INTERPRET PARK'S REMARKS, WHICH WERE
CONFIRMED IN LARGE PART DURING EVENING CONVERSATION WITH
CHOI KWANG-SU, PARK IS WILLING TO RELEASE MYONGDONG DEFENDANTS
PROVIDED THEIR RELEASE DOES NOT THEN BECOME SIGNAL
FOR MORE WIDESPREAD ACTS OF DISSENT AND IN PARTICULAR
DISORDER. HE DOES NOT WISH TO APPEAR TO BE REACTING
PER SE TO "AMERICAN PRESSURE," BUT RATHER RESPONDING TO
POLITICAL APPEAL FROM PRESIDENT CARTER. HE IS MOREOVER
IMPLICITLY ASKING FROM US A SIGNAL TO KIM DAE JUNG AND
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OTHERS IN THE OPPOSITION THAT WE ARE NOT PREPARED TO
PRESSURE PARK IN THEIR SUPPORT TO REVISE CONSTITUTION OR
TO ACCEPT OPPOSITION DEMONSTRATIONS AND OTHER ACTIONS WHICH
WOULD LEAD TO "SOCIAL DISORDER."

10. CHOI ADDED LAST NIGHT IN TALKING TO ME THAT PARK IS
MUCH ATTRACTED TO POSITION TAKEN BY PRESIDENT CARTER IN
HIS LETTER ON HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE, PARTICULARLY THAT WE
ARE NOT SEEKING TO INTERFERE IN DOMESTIC POLITICS OR SEEKING
TO CHANGE STRUCTURE OF GOVERNMENT, BUT RATHER SEEKING A
BROADENING OF INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS. HE IS PREPARED
TO MOVE IN THIS DIRECTION AS LONG AS OPPOSITION DOES NOT
BELIEVE HE IS ACTING UNDER US "PRESSURE." HOWEVER,
PACE AND DEGREE OF EXPANSION OF RIGHTS UNDOUBTEDLY IS
CRITICAL POINT ON WHICH THERE IS LIKELY TO BE DISAGREEMENT.
PARK IS THEREFORE PREPARED TO BE FLEXIBLE BUT JUST HOW FAR

IS THE REAL QUESTION. IN ANY EVENT, HIS TACTICS ARE EFFORT
TO HIT THE BALL BACK TO US RYTHERN THAN LEAVING IT IN HIS
OWN COURT.
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